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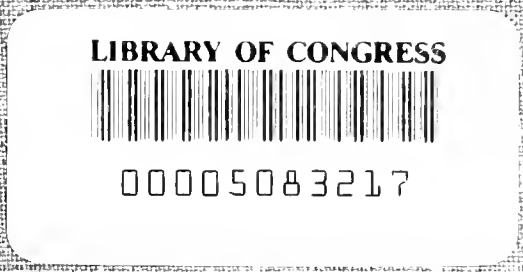

SAMUEL DELUCENNA INGHAM

From a portrait painted about 1815, now in the possession of his grandson, James Verree Ingham, 1909.

SAMUEL DELUCENNA INGHAM

By

William Armstrong Ingham

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SAMUEL DELUCENNA INGHAM

Jonas Ingham, the great-grandfather of Samuel Delucenna Ingham, emigrated from England to New England in 1705. He remained sometime there, but nothing is known of his life there. He probably had with him some other relatives, as there is a family of the name in Connecticut, from whom are descended the Inghams of Central New York. He probably came from Yorkshire, where the name is still to be found, but being a member of the Society of Friends, it has been impossible to trace his ancestry by the usual methods of parish records and baptismal certificates. He was by trade a fuller, and there is a tradition that after leaving New England he operated a fulling mill at Trenton, on an island at the mouth of the Assampink, in the Delaware River, which island is now washed away to a mere gravel bar. Thence he came to Bucks County with his only son, Jonathan. In 1747 Jonathan purchased the Great Spring tract from James Logan, built a fulling mill on the stream and carried on the business of fuller and farmer.

Jonathan filled the offices of Justice of the Peace and Judge, and, as a member of the Colonial Assembly, took an active part in the contests of that body with the proprietors. Jonathan had three sons, John, Jonas and Jonathan, who received the best education which the condition of the country afforded, but at the same time were carefully instructed in their father's business. They were quite different in their intellectual tastes. John, the eldest, became a religious enthusiast and wrote largely on speculative theology. His father was an uncompromising sectarian, and contrary to the opinion and wishes of his other sons, particularly the youngest, he considered the heretical doctrines promulgated in John's books to be proofs of a disordered mind

and made them the pretext for John's confinement in an insane asylum, where he soon after died.

Jonas, the second son, manifested a decided inclination towards the exact sciences. He held that nothing ought to be considered true unless demonstrated, and bent every effort to overcome the objection to this axiom in philosophy. He cultivated natural philosophy, was an excellent mathematician and was the author of many useful inventions in mechanics. He seriously offended his father by an unsanctioned marriage and is supposed to have removed to Bradford County, Pennsylvania, where many of his descendants still reside. He died at the age of eighty-two.

Jonathan, the youngest son of Jonathan and father of Samuel D. Ingham, at an early age showed a strong predilection for the study of language. He read the Greek and Latin classics and had some acquaintance with Hebrew. About the age of nineteen he, like his brothers, offended his father and left his home. He engaged as an assistant on the farm of Dr. Pascal, near Darby. The doctor was attracted by the young man's studious habits and offered him a situation as a student of medicine. Having completed his course and having become reconciled to his father, he was invited home and placed at the head of the establishment instead of his brother Jonas. At the age of twenty-five he married Ann Welding, of Bordentown, New Jersey, and was soon enabled, with the aid of his wife's portion, to purchase the family estate.

In a short time he became a practising physician of ability, his practice covering a wide territory on both sides of the Delaware River. At the same time he managed the farm and fulling mill. He was a great athlete and there are stories told of his mowing a swath down hill from the road to the mill dam and at the bottom plunging into the water without undressing and his swimming his horse across the Delaware on a visit to a patient in New Jersey. He continued his favorite pursuits, became a good Latin and Greek scholar, a proficient in German, and tolerably versed in Hebrew, French and Spanish. Among his manuscripts were found translations of many of the Odes of Pindar and Theocritus and some of the books of Fenelon, turned into English verse.

He engaged as instructor a foreign gentleman named Antony Delucenna, to whom he became so much attached that he named his son Samuel partly in his honor.

Dr. Ingham was a strong partisan of the cause of the colonies in the Revolution, though he did not enter the military service like his brother Jonas, who was an officer in a volunteer corps. When Washington's army crossed the Delaware at Coryell's Ferry and encamped on his place, he was active in the hospitals established there.

On the close of the Revolution he took an active part on the side of the Republican Whigs and wrote with force and effect against what he thought to be monarchical tendencies in certain proposed measures. He also boldly denounced the scheme of funding the war debt for the exclusive benefit of speculators, while the poor soldier, for all his privations, sufferings and services, was to be content to receive two shillings and sixpence in the pound for his certificate.

To many of his neighbors, the doctor's politics were anything but palatable, but his assailants were easily silenced by the pungent satire of his burlesque pindarics, the only mode of retort of which he deemed them worthy.

During the prevalence of yellow fever in Philadelphia, in 1793, the doctor made a visit to the city for the purpose of studying the new and dreadful disease. He had scarcely returned home when, hearing of its extended ravages and of the flight of many of the physicians, he exclaimed loudly against the conduct of these gentlemen as inhuman and a disgrace to the profession. He immediately returned to the city and with his friends, Dr. Hutchinson and Mr. Samuel Wetherill, Jr., visited, advised and ministered to the sufferers in the most infected districts. Soon after he returned home he was attacked by the disease.

He had strong belief in the curative power of the water of Schooley's Mountain Springs, and for that and for the benefit of a change of air he started for Schooley's Mountain in his farm wagon, accompanied by his wife and her brother. On the way they were refused admission at all houses, and he died in the wagon by the roadside at a point about a mile west of Clinton, New Jersey.

He died on October 1st, 1793, and was buried in the neighboring graveyard of Bethlehem Presbyterian Church. He left a widow, four sons, of whom Samuel was the oldest, and three daughters.

Samuel D. Ingham was born on the 16th of September, 1779. His father undertook his education and, before the boy could well read English, placed in his hands Ruddiman's Latin Grammar. But the doctor was a very busy man, and his son, boy like, preferred play to study, so that the father's plan of conducting the son's education was abandoned and Samuel, at the age of ten, was sent to a school at a distance and commenced the Greek Grammar. After three months, his father was dissatisfied with his progress and sent him to a school near Durham, at the northern end of the county, to learn German. He was making rapid progress in German when, at the end of six weeks, the school was closed and his father, making one more effort in behalf of the classics, sent him back to his Greek and Latin.

Before he attained his fourteenth year, the death of his father seemed to terminate his course of classical studies. The various branches of the doctor's work were interrupted and deranged and the widow was left to care for her young children. She necessarily adopted the advice of their experienced grandfather and the young scholar was apprenticed to a paper maker, on Pennypack Creek, with a view to the future erection of a paper mill on a site on the property.

The admonition of a bereaved mother, coupled with a full realization of his altered circumstances, seemed to change him from a pleasure-loving, somewhat-idle boy, into a thoughtful, hardworking young man, and he immediately adopted that course which he afterwards inflexibly pursued.

His new place of abode was at a mill on the Pennypack, some twenty miles from home and about fifteen miles from Philadelphia. One of his first cares was to secure a share in a library about four miles distant. Here he spent a part of every Saturday afternoon in reading. Finding a translation of Cicero's Orations, he continued to refer to the original and went through the whole book. This was followed by a general review of the Latin classics. During the course of this probation, the derision of

his companions was avoided by a total absence of affectation of superiority, a deportment of unchanged civility and by pleading unavoidable absence or an important engagement as an excuse when asked to join in any scheme of frolic or mischief.

Being left to pursue his studies without interruption, he would naturally have resumed the study of Greek, once so distasteful, but for the arrival in the neighborhood of a teacher of mathematics, Mr. John D. Craig, an emigrant from Ireland, and a person of great ability. An acquaintance was soon formed which grew into friendship. This strengthened young Ingham's predilection for the exact sciences.

During the summer he devoted to the school all his spare time and in the winter attended the teacher at his own house. He read the best elementary treatises on mathematics, with their applications to mechanics, surveying, navigation, astronomy and natural philosophy.

The unremitting application of the scholar and the unwearied attention of the teacher combined to create a strong friendship between them, and, though separated for many years, the pupil never forgot his preceptor. Long afterward, when the apprentice boy had become Secretary of the Treasury of the United States, the obscure mathematician was appointed by President Jackson to a position for which he was well qualified, that of Superintendent of the Patent Office.

After being deprived of his instructor, young Ingham pursued alone the path he had pointed out and with untiring zeal. While the warm months of summer permitted, he studied in a retreat he had contrived in the midst of a thicket of laurel and green brier, on a point of land projecting into the mill dam, but in winter time he was obliged to study in the midst of a numerous family. His time being valuable, he invented an expedient to save time. He prepared large diagrams of problems in geometry and conic sections, with the demonstrations. Placing these before him while engaged at work, he found that he could readily follow Euclid while his hands were employed. But this devotion to study was never allowed to interfere with his regular work.

His guardian was General Van Horn, of Zanesville, Ohio, an

intimate friend of his father. The General generously advanced from his private funds the means of purchasing the necessary books. The severity of his master continually placed impediments in his way. In order to get the books, the apprentice was compelled to walk to Philadelphia, a distance of sixteen miles, after the completion of his task on Saturday afternoon. On one occasion he was refused leave of absence unless he would agree to return the same night, and he actually walked the thirty-two miles, bringing back his quarto volume of astronomical tables before the family had retired. In the performance of this feat there may have been a little pique mingled with his love of learning, but it strongly exhibits the determination of his character.

These arbitrary acts on the part of his master were soon to terminate. A discussion arose as to the legal right of an apprentice to a certain portion of tuition, which resulted in an amicable cancellation of the indenture.

He was now nineteen years old. The first year of his freedom was passed chiefly in assisting his mother at the homestead and the second in managing a paper mill near Bloomfield, in East Jersey. Here he became acquainted with his future wife, Miss Rebecca Dodd. On attaining his twenty-first year he took possession of his patrimonial estate, charged with numerous legacies. The long contemplated paper mill was now built. This was erected under his sole direction, every part of the machinery being constructed by the ordinary workmen of the vicinity from models which he furnished.

Having married immediately after he became of age, and taken up his fixed residence at the family farm, his known political sentiments secured him a cordial welcome from the Democratic Republicans of the neighborhood and he was soon called upon to represent them in the political meetings of the county. He there embraced the opportunity of defending his guardian against aspersions and of promoting his election to Congress. He was for several years Secretary of the Democratic county meetings, was an ardent supporter of Thomas McKean for Governor of the State and in the same year was elected from Bucks County to the General Assembly. To this he was

returned the two following years. A project was started at this time to amend the Constitution of the United States by making the appointment of Judges of the Supreme Court for a fixed term of years and so rendering them dependent on the Executive. In this Mr. Ingham took ground in favor of an independent judiciary.

This period was remarkable as the commencement of the system of internal improvements in Pennsylvania, which was subsequently so extensively accomplished.

It was also remarkable for an unusual violence of party feeling stimulated by the personal enemies of Governor McKean. Mr. Ingham declined a re-election in 1808 and remained at home and applied his efforts to restoring harmony among the Republicans of his county.

He received from the Governor, unsolicited, a commission as Justice of the Peace, and, though retired from political life, he was active in local matters of public interest. Among other things, he contributed largely to secure the erection of the Delaware River bridge at New Hope. This was the first of the bridges between Easton and Trenton and was a remarkable piece of engineering construction.

After the declaration of the war of 1812, he was elected by a majority of two thousand votes to the thirteenth Congress of the United States and took his seat at the May session of 1813. He became Chairman of the Committee on Pensions and Revolutionary Claims and was a member of the select committee to consider the policy of establishing a national bank to finance the country during the war.

He introduced a resolution for a general revision of the tariff. This he renewed at the next session through the Committee of Ways and Means, which produced the report of Mr. Dallas, the basis of the subsequent Tariff Law of 1816.

In the session following, 1814–15, he was placed on the Committee of Ways and Means. The Treasury Department was practically vacant through the illness of the Secretary, the loans had failed and, when the Committee commenced their labors to restore the public credit, the finances of the Government were in the worst possible condition. In this crisis, the appointment of Mr. Dallas to the Treasury, while it inspired confidence to the

country, imparted to the Committee an impetus which enabled it to accomplish the most arduous duties. With the aid of the Secretary, they rearranged the whole internal revenue system, extending its scope considerably beyond the supplies for a peace expenditure and the payment of the war debt.

The state of the public finances had induced many members to consider the subject of a legal tender. To this Mr. Ingham was opposed, and, in lieu of it, he proposed in his Committee an issue of Treasury Notes, not bearing interest, but liable at all times to be funded in small sums at such a rate of interest as would withdraw from circulation the redundant issues. This plan was adopted by Congress and became a law. The restoration of peace prevented a trial of its general effect, but, so far as it went, it was well received and the Treasury Notes fundable at seven per cent. circulated more freely than those bearing interest. They were in a short time all funded or reduced and withdrawn from circulation.

The army, revenue and bank bills were the principal measures of this session. Every inch of ground was obstinately contested by a numerous and talented opposition and the duties of the several Committees in charge of these measures were peculiarly arduous. A contemporary writer says of Mr. Ingham: "Having but partially cultivated the art of public speaking, Mr. Ingham seldom ventured deeply into debate. His strength lay in the Committee room, where, in investigation of facts, he was pre-eminent. He enjoyed the full confidence of his associates, but he did not conceal his opinions, and his frankness openly condemned some of the policies of the friends of the administration, such as concealing from the people the actual necessities of the government and charging the blame for its failures upon the opposition. He contended that the majority were responsible to the country and this responsibility should never be unfelt or disavowed."

The labors of this session were nearly closed and most of the means for the next campaign were provided, when peace took place.

Mr. Ingham had been elected to the fourteenth Congress by an increased majority. In the two succeeding sessions he con-

tinued to serve on the Committee of Ways and Means, which revised the whole impost and internal revenue system, and reported the bill for the Tariff of 1816.

He was also chairman of the Committee on Post Offices and Post Roads, and, as head of a select committee, conducted a laborious investigation of the fiscal affairs of the General Post Office. The laws relative to the Post Office were revised, the rates of postage reduced, and the policy adopted of applying the entire revenue of that department to extension of mail routes and improvement of conveyance.

He was re-elected to the fifteenth Congress without opposition, resumed his station at the head of the Post Office Committee, and, as head of a Select Committee assisted in regulating and fixing the compensation of the clerks in the office, which had previously depended on caprice or favoritism.

At the close of this session he resigned his seat, principally on account of his wife's health, and accepted the position of Prothonotary of the Court of Common Pleas of Bucks County, and in 1819 was appointed by Governor Findley, Secretary of the Commonwealth. His wife died in that year. He spent the next two years at home, busied at his farm and paper mill.

In 1822 he married Miss Deborah Kay Hall, of Salem, New Jersey, and in October of that year he was elected to Congress. He again was appointed on the Committee of Ways and Means, and Chairman of the Post Office Committee, where he remained, being returned to every Congress until March 4th, 1829.

In 1824 there was no election of a President by the people and the election devolved on the House of Representatives. The three highest candidates were Adams, Jackson and Clay. Adams and Clay combined their forces and elected Adams. Hence arose the famous charge of "Bargain and Sale" with which the country rang for the next four years. It was charged that Adams agreed, in consideration of Clay's support, to appoint Clay Secretary of State. This charge was publicly made before the election in the House and was investigated by a committee, but, whether there was or was not a bargain prior to the ballot, as a fact Clay's votes were cast for Adams and Adams did appoint Clay Secretary of State.

The storm of rage on the part of Jackson's friends which swept the country for the next four years is almost incomprehensible in these days of political deals. We would not now call such men traitors to the Constitution, an illegal unconstitutional minority usurping office, etc., etc.

About this time Mr. Ingham issued a pamphlet on the Life and Character of John Quincy Adams, in which he showed from speeches, letters and other public utterances, that John Quincy Adams was at heart a Monarchist. This pamphlet is alleged to have had great influence in the next Presidential campaign (1828), which resulted in the election of Andrew Jackson.

For this Adams never forgave Mr. Ingham. He was of a vindictive temper and revenged himself by inserting in his diary items of Washington gossip and scandal which were daily current. This diary was published without revision by his son, Charles Francis Adams, twenty years after the death of every one involved.

On the arrival of General Jackson at Washington, after his election in 1828, he consulted with the members of the Pennsylvania delegation and they recommended Mr. Ingham for the Treasury Department, which recommendation was approved by Mr. Calhoun, Vice-President-elect, a personal friend of Mr. Ingham of long standing.

Though Mr. Ingham's preference was for the Post Office Department, he accepted the position of Secretary of the Treasury. His associates were: Martin Van Buren, of New York, Secretary of State; John H. Eaton, of Tennessee, Secretary of War; John Branch, of North Carolina, Secretary of the Navy; John McPherson Berrien, of Georgia, Attorney General; Wm. T. Barry, of Kentucky, Postmaster General.

When in 1831 President Jackson changed his previously announced intention not to be a candidate for re-election, being urged thereto by some of his confidential advisers, among them Mr. Van Buren, he found in his Cabinet many personal friends of Mr. Calhoun, the Vice-President, a rival candidate, and, not being yet ready for open warfare, which would have broken out if he had removed only Calhoun's friends, he decided to change his whole Cabinet. This reason for the change was often mentioned to the

writer by Mr. Ingham. But there was a great public scandal in Washington, which was made the pretext for the change. The President tried in every way to force Washington society to recognize the wife of his bosom friend, Major Eaton, Secretary of War. This was refused by the wives of the other Secretaries, who declined to call on Mrs. Eaton, or to meet her socially in any way, and in this they were sustained by their husbands. What this scandal was and whether true or false, is immaterial. The fact is that it was made the pretext for the dismissal of the Cabinet.

As Mr. Ingham's successor, Louis McLane, of Maryland, was unable immediately to take office, he remained in charge temporarily during part of the summer of 1831. While staying in Washington, Major Eaton tried to fix a quarrel upon him by demanding an apology and challenging him to a duel. Mr. Ingham declined both and it was reported that Major Eaton sought to provoke a street brawl. Mr. Ingham armed himself and went abroad accompanied by his son. Nothing came of this and shortly afterwards Mr. Ingham left Washington. On his returning home he was greeted by a meeting of his constituents, to whom he made a speech, which was printed in the county newspaper. This speech the writer has read, but has been unable to procure a copy of it.

After Mr. Ingham's resignation, he ceased to take an active part in politics, but devoted his energies to his private affairs, his farm, his paper mill, and his lime-kiln. He became interested in the development of the anthracite coal fields, was one of the founders and for a time President of the Beaver Meadow Railroad Company, and afterwards assisted in forming the Hazleton Coal Company. These coal interests turned his attention to the canals, the Lehigh Navigation and the Delaware Division, and he spent much time at Harrisburg in advocating improvement and opposing injurious suggestions before the Legislature. He was especially earnest in opposing an outlet lock at Black's Eddy to enable boats to pass into the head of the Delaware and Raritan Canal Feeder, contending that this would practically dry up the canal between Black's Eddy and New Hope, where water is lifted from the river to replenish the canal. The opposition

was successful and the site of the outlet was fixed at New Hope, where it now is.

He also wrote much about the tariff, from the point of view of an ardent protectionist. Thus his time was fully occupied in his private affairs and in the management of the corporations above mentioned. On one occasion he spent five months at Beaver Meadow, writing every day to his wife, "I expect to start for home to-morrow." In 1839 he visited England on business connected with the affairs of the Hazelton Coal Company. The object of his visit being attained, he then visited parts of the continent and returned home in the fall. As he grew older he became tired of the long stage journey to Philadelphia and the three days across country to the coal fields and decided to remove to Trenton, which was done in 1849. Just before his removal he spent several days in going through his accumulation of letters and destroying almost everything of interest. He said that he had seen so much mischief caused by the posthumous publication of private letters, that he could not allow his correspondence to remain.

This idea seems highly commendable, but, if it had been universally practiced, where would be the materials for modern history? At any rate, I have always regretted that I was not present at this holocaust; I might have retrieved some invaluable papers.

After his removal to Trenton he continued his activity in business, became interested in the Mechanics Bank and, for his private amusement, purchased an old brick yard and spent much time in converting it into a wheat field. He took an interest in the election in 1856, and wrote a speech which was read at a Fremont meeting in Philadelphia.

His later years were spent on a sick bed and, after a long illness, during which his mind was perfectly unimpaired and he was always cheerful, and, though suffering, uncomplaining, he died on the 5th of June, 1860.

He was buried in the cemetery of the Old Solebury Church, now the Thompson Memorial Church, which he regularly had attended during the later years of his residence at Great Spring.

In person Mr. Ingham was of medium height, with broad shoulders, and strong. His forehead was broad and high; his eyes rather small, light blue and keen in expression. His manner was grave and dignified, though he was not without a sense of humor. He was not a person with whom liberties could be taken, not even by his children. Yet he was warm-hearted and devoted to his friends.

He was universally respected by his associates and passed through a long life without a stain.

His wife outlived him and three sons and two daughters. Dr. John Howard Ingham and Jonathan Ingham were the children of his first marriage; of his second were Eliza Rebecca, wife of Rev. Dr. George Hale, Mary Louise, wife of Edwin Emerson, and William Armstrong Ingham.

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